

Soldiers visit Dallas school students, talk about Iraq

By Capt. Michael Greenberger

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Soldiers from the 3rd Signal Brigade's 16th Signal Battalion traveled to Dallas last week to talk with high school students about their experiences in the military.

Under the Total Army Involvement in Recruiting program, recruiters request support from local installations. Fort Hood is a major supporter of the Dallas Recruiting Company and offers Soldiers about once a month to support the community.

Dallas Recruiting Company Commander Capt. Joe Martinez says they receive 75 to 90 percent of their support from Fort Hood.

Staff sergeants Andres Guarnizo and Kerry Isom began their week in Dallas at the Dallas Recruiting Company where Martinez laid out a plan that would take the Soldiers to Dallas-Fort Worth-area high schools. Each day the Soldiers would visit one of the seven stations in the Dallas Company and link up with a recruiter who would take them to visit a high school in their area.

Audiences ranging from high school freshmen to seniors attended hour to two-hour sessions where local recruiters spoke for about 10 minutes about what the military has to offer before introducing Guarnizo and Isom to the students. The pair then shared their experiences in the Army and in Iraq with the wide-eyed students and took time to answer questions.

"If I join the Army will I go to Iraq right away?" topped the list of most-asked questions.

While the war on terrorism was a popular concern with students, the real-life experiences of these two signal Soldiers cleared their concerns and paved the way for questions that gave them insight into what the Army is really like.

Students asked what an average day was like for the Soldiers, as well as what benefits the Army had to offer.

Hearing it from Soldiers – and not recruiters – is exactly why TAIR exists, according to Martinez. Soldiers who come from the same places as these recruit candidates have a lot to say about what the Army has done to improve their lives.

According to Martinez, Soldiers from a variety of backgrounds are tapped for TAIR missions, depending on what the recruiting market is looking for.

"If a certain area is interested in the medical field, we request medical MOSs," Martinez said.



Photo by Capt. Michael Greenberger, 3rd Sig. Bde. PAO
Staff Sgt. Andres Guarnizo talks with students at a high school in Dallas.

Certain areas have specific interests because of the surrounding community and how it is set up. One particular community might exist around a hospital, another around an auto plant.

"We try to meet the needs and desires of a particular area when deciding who to request from the TAIR managers on the installations we request support from," said Martinez.

"The program is pretty good because students get a different perspective, 'This is what we do,' and they're not hearing it from a recruiter who is trying to sell them on the Army," said Guarnizo, who has been in the Army for 10 years and wants to go to warrant officer school to become an Army aviator.

"The kids especially like to hear about all the benefits we get and people might not think of every day, like the medical, dental, life insurance and such," he said.

Several of the schools visited had the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps. JROTC is an elective class, which teaches students about the military, military history, leadership, citizenship and some Soldier skills, like drill and ceremonies, physical fitness, marksmanship, and how to wear a uniform.

While not all JROTC students are interested in military service, the ones who are were especially pleased to learn that their experience in the JROTC can earn them immediate promotion and higher pay upon enlistment into the Army.

Another program, the Special Recruiter Assistance Program, is open to all Soldiers interested in serving the communities where they grew up by helping local recruiters. Soldiers interested in applying for the SRAP can visit <http://www.usarec.army.mil/>.